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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7440th meeting
Tuesday, 12 May 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Henry Alfredo Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 29 April 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/300)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 29 April 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/300)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/300, which contains the text of a letter dated 29 April 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the forty-seventh report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: In six months' time, when I next appear before the Security Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina will be marking the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords. At the beginning of July, we will also be marking the twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.

Much has been achieved since that all-important day in November 1995 when Richard Holbrooke finally succeeded in brokering an agreement to end Europe's most tragic conflict since the end of the Second World War. Bosnia and Herzegovina has come a long way since then, but it is also true that what happens during the next six months will play a hugely significant role in determining how the twentieth anniversary of Dayton will be viewed by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Peace is, of course, a priceless commodity. It should never be taken for granted. But it is a starting point, not the end state. It is entirely right that after 20 years the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina — especially the young — expect so much more from their country and their politicians. They are suffering from the highest youth unemployment rate in Europe and many of them are leaving the country. They are right to expect more because Bosnia and Herzegovina truly does have the potential to offer its citizens prosperity and a normal way of life. I take this opportunity to encourage members of the Security Council to visit that beautiful land to see for themselves its spectacular landscapes and its rich cultural diversity.

What needs to happen in the next six months so that we can mark the twentieth anniversary with a sense of renewed optimism about the future and, even more importantly, so that we can re-energize the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina? The answer is very simple. We need to see the newly elected authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina — and the country in general — coming together to deliver the steps that are required to take advantage of the new European Union (EU) initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The good news is that we now have Governments in place at the State and entity levels that are showing signs that they are ready to start implementing the written commitment that was adopted in March and has opened the way for the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU to enter into force. However, progress will require concrete results to be delivered. Some of the reforms will be very difficult, but they will deliver new opportunities for the country and its people. Specifically, we need to see concrete results that will create new jobs, improve the functioning and functionality of institutions, and entrench the rule of law, especially when it comes to the fight against crime and corruption.

I believe that a great deal can be achieved in 2015 if there is a renewed commitment within the country and among its political leaders to pulling together and to working together — to working as one. This is what we need to see and we need to see it quickly so that the new Governments can build up real momentum for reform. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been given a fresh chance and it must be taken. I would therefore like to take

this opportunity to sincerely thank Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier for launching the initiative that has given Bosnia and Herzegovina this fresh chance.

I also want to thank High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn for taking the initiative forward. High Representative Mogherini has already been to Bosnia and Herzegovina three times. Commissioner Hahn visited Bosnia and Herzegovina just last week and again showed his commitment to that country.

A new Special Representative of the European Union, Ambassador Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, has recently joined us in Sarajevo, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome him warmly and to once again express my strong commitment to working hand-in-glove with him to assist those citizens and politicians who want to move the country forward.

The initiative offers Bosnia and Herzegovina the chance to end years of stagnation and to get the country back on track towards the brighter future we all want for its people. However, we need to recognize that there are no guaranteed outcomes. Is there an alternative? Of course there is. That alternative is to continue doing what we have seen over and over again. The alternative for the country's politicians is to continue practicing the politics of the past that have been driving the country ever deeper into crisis at the expense of all its citizens, especially the young.

I must be frank — there are some politicians who may be tempted to follow this negative and dangerous path. As I have made clear in my report (S/2015/300, annex), there have also been negative developments over the past six months that include direct challenges to the Peace Agreement. Of particular concern is the declaration adopted by the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska on 17 April, which directly challenges the authority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court. A second example is the declaration of the ruling party in the Republika Srpska of 25 April. While it is only a party document that has no official value, I am nevertheless concerned by its threat to hold an independence referendum in Republika Srpska in 2018. The problem has a name — it is "referendum" — and it has a date: 2018. As I have made clear repeatedly, the Peace Agreement does not grant the entities the right to secede, and any attempt to change the Peace Agreement requires the agreement of all the parties.

A week after I submitted my report, Bosnia and Herzegovina was rocked by a shocking incident, when a lone attacker killed one police officer and injured two others at a police station. I take this opportunity to again offer my condolences to the family of the police officer who lost his life in the line of duty. I also wish a speedy recovery to the two injured police officers. The response of the authorities was swift, and it will be important for us to see ever-closer cooperation between authorities at all levels, inside the country and in the region, in tackling a wide range of law enforcement challenges facing the country, including the ongoing fight against terrorism, which as we know is a global change.

To conclude my remarks today, an opportunity is on the table from the EU that offers the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina a chance to ensure a prosperous and dignified life for themselves and their children. This is the time for the country's politicians to decisively look to the future in the interests of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the young. This is the moment when the country needs to finally say farewell to the politics of the past and to decisively commit to a new way of doing politics that puts the interests of citizens firmly in first place. This is truly the time for Bosnia and Herzegovina to come together and to work as one.

I very much hope that the visit of the Pope to Sarajevo in June will help to foster a sense of unity in the country. I cannot stress strongly enough that this opportunity must be taken. If we see hard work and results in the weeks and months ahead, then we will be able to look forward with real optimism when we come together to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Peace Agreement in November. There are politicians and people in Bosnia and Herzegovina who want to work together in good faith to take the country forward. They must have our full and proactive support in the months ahead.

The drawing of borders in Bosnia and Herzegovina is behind us. Division and secession are failed strategies that were defeated 20 years ago. Their place is in the history books; God forbid that anyone should seek to reactivate these dangerous strategies. If they do, they will need to be dealt with firmly and decisively. In this respect, I will continue to take my responsibilities under the Peace Agreement with the utmost seriousness.

As more and more people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region and indeed beyond now fully understand, the future of that part of Europe is

reintegration from within and integration with the wider continent. This is the era not of division, but of renewed bridge-building. The expanding force of forward-looking people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is growing stronger by the day, and what a positive force it is as it crosses ethnic and religious lines and re-energizes the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to work together to build a better tomorrow. As an aside, I should like to inform the Council that two Muslims are currently building and renovating a Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such interreligious dialogue for a better tomorrow is also a fact that we should not forget.

We, the international community, are dutybound to recognize the importance of this moment. We must do all we can to help the forces of positive change in the country to reach their surge capacity. I must add, however, that the international community's support for the Office of the High Representative is in fact waning, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for me to fulfil my mandate. Now is not the time for us to lose focus or resolve, and I ask for the Council's full support as we help Bosnia and Herzegovina to move along the path towards the EU.

Let us do all we can in the next six months to help these peoples to seize the opportunity the country has been given by the EU so that 2015 is remembered as the year Bosnia and Herzegovina turned decisively to the future. I hope that this is what we will achieve so that we can mark the twentieth anniversary of the Peace Agreement with a sense of genuine optimism about the future. This is what I hope to report to the Council when I return in November, six months from now.

The President: I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I thank High Representative Inzko for his work and his briefing today. We reiterate our support for him and his Office, as well as for the Council's mandate and the European Union (EU) military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we commend his continued efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On behalf of my Government, I want to congratulate the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina on some of the very positive progress that has been made since the Council met in November (see S/PV.7308), most notably the formation of a new Government following general elections in October 2014. Although the process has not been without some rough patches, this is a major achievement that must be acknowledged. With elections completed and Governments formed, we encourage elected officials to take seriously the promises they have made to pursue an ambitious and necessary set of political and economic reforms, focusing on investment and economic growth as a priority. In that regard, statements by the respective Prime Ministers have been encouraging, and we are now looking for actions to back those statements, particularly in the implementation of badly needed socioeconomic reform.

We congratulate the Bosnian Government's formal decision to commit to the EU integration process, and we commit to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's express goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. The country's 14 political leaders, its Presidency and its Parliamentary Assembly have endorsed a commitment to pursuing reforms necessary for Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance on the EU track, and the United States welcomes the EU Foreign Affair Council's decision of 21 April concluding the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. When it comes into force on 1 June, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have an opportunity to make real progress on its integration into the EU.

On the specific issue of defence property registration, one of the conditions for ending international supervision of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we were pleased to see that authorities have made some progress through the registration of three properties in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will continue to work with Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to ensure the registration of the remaining properties so that the country will be able to activate its NATO membership action plan.

We also welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to address the issue of foreign fighters heading into Syria. Bosnia and Herzegovina is an integral member of the counter-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant coalition and has provided needed ammunition to the Iraq security forces. We are also grateful for the country's active participation in our efforts to counter violent extremism.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's armed forces have benefited greatly from the presence of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR). As we reiterated to the Council last November, the United States fully supports the efforts

of EUFOR to mentor the country's armed forces to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the tools needed to respond to crises. We welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's active contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The United States also shares the concerns of High Representative Inzko about a number of issues he referred to today, which he wrote about more fully in his report (S/2015/300, annex). One of our greatest concerns has been the continuing actions by Republika Srpska President Dodik that undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In March, Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats party decided to boycott the State-level Parliament. And he recently made statements calling into question the authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina's federal Government. He promised to put forward a resolution for Republika Srpska independence unless the entity was able to strengthen its autonomy by the end of 2017. That is an unfortunate about-face for a leader who, less than two months ago, committed to pursue reforms that would bring the entire country of Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to Europe. Those reforms focus on improving the country's socioeconomic and political conditions, with the goal of attracting investment and creating jobs. The reforms also address the needs on the ground and, once implemented, will provide tangible benefits to all the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nationalistic rhetoric not only runs counter to the commitment that leaders have made, it also threatens the integrity of the country and the potential for much-needed economic assistance. The Dayton Peace Agreement guarantees the existence of both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. We strongly condemn any action that seeks to undermine the territorial integrity of the Bosnian State.

Moreover, we are also concerned about democratic backsliding in the Republika Srpska, whose law on public order is a big and unfortunate step backward. The law seeks to control digital media and social networks by determining that the Internet is a "public space" and leaves individuals subject to prosecution if the Government determines that public order has been threatened as a result of their online activities. Efforts by the Republika Srpska to control online activities through the threat of prosecution is a dangerous and worrisome attempt to curb the freedom of speech. That kind of censorship stunts democratic growth and runs contrary to the values required for European integration.

The Republika Srpska's lack of compliance with its obligations to provide the High Representative with timely access to officials, institutions and documents is also of concern. In that regard, we reiterate call for all authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate with the High Representative's request for information and documents.

As the twentieth anniversary of Srebrenica approaches, on 11 July, we are reminded that, while the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is over, much remains to be done. All of us have a responsibility to remember the horrors and atrocities, but we have an obligation to do more than remember. We have an obligation to vigorously and steadfastly oppose policies of hate and discrimination. We continue to call for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens and its leaders to work together to pursue a common vision for a secure and prosperous future — or, in Mr. Inzko's words, a better tomorrow.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for submitting his report (S/2015/300, annex).

Chile supports the implementation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, as well as safeguarding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that effectively implementing the Accords, along with respect for the rule of law, is essential to a lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, we welcome the new Government formed on 31 March. We urge all political leaders to take advantage of that opportunity to move towards genuine integration and national reconciliation.

Chile regrets the lack of progress on implementing the Dayton Accords, which illustrates the persistence of disagreement among political parties and the difficulty in forming the new Government in the various cantons. It is necessary that the political leaders of the different communities in the country do more to advance the strengthening of democratic institutions, while expanding institutional reforms in an inclusive manner.

We also urge them to refrain from negative rhetoric that undermines the cohesion among the various ethnic communities in the country, thereby hindering national reconciliation. For instance, calls encouraging options that could create the potential for the secession of

Republika Srpska present a critical situation. We call for cooperation with the High Representative with regard to events that have the potential to affect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We support the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome its past. We also emphasize the importance of the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, which will contribute to mending the broken social fabric and which is an essential step towards national reconciliation. In that context, cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia remains a priority challenge so that those responsible for genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity do not go unpunished. The effectiveness of institutions such as the Tribunal contributes to the development of jurisprudence and to safeguarding universally shared ethical principles of justice and reparation.

We reiterate our strong support for a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina with functioning institutions in the service of its people, in peace and prosperity. Chile participated in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina with police personnel. Our participation continues today in Operation Althea of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This year marks 12 years of uninterrupted Chilean military presence in the latter.

Likewise, we call on the international community to continue to honour its commitment to support the aspirations of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to provide the necessary resources to fulfil the mandate provided for under the Dayton Accords.

We conclude by reiterating our appreciation for the work of the High Representative as part of his efforts to strengthen the rule of law, monitor compliance with the rulings of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and facilitate reforms aimed at ensuring conditions for the functioning of institutions, social stability and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We emphasize that his Office should continue to receive political support to carry out its important functions.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Welcome Mr. Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. His regular briefing has confirmed that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains stable, which we view as the basis for the sustainable functioning of the country's institutions in strict compliance with the equality of the three constituent peoples, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The establishment, on 31 March, of the new State and entity ruling bodies, following the elections in October, which took place democratically, has confirmed the ability of local actors to resolve their problems without the support of an international protectorate. It is important to continue the process of transferring full responsibility for the situation to Bosnians themselves.

The abolition of the Office of the High Representative is long overdue. In that context, the primary task is to conclude the implementation of the agreement of the "5+2" programme. The problems that have not been settled within that framework must be resolved by the Bosnians themselves through an inclusive dialogue and on the basis of agreement among all three constituent peoples. The exclusive task of the High Representative is to move the local parties towards such dialogue and to seek points of understanding, but instead of reporting on what has been been done towards the timely drawdown of the Office of the High Representative, the current report simply reiterates what happened in the country during the reporting period.

It does not propose any constructive solutions. It looks for people to blame. There is no end to the illegal and unjustified accusations against Bosnian Serbs, who are allegedly undermining the Dayton constitutional foundations, sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such a one-sided philosophical approach will only distort the real state of affairs and aggravate the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It ignores in practice the claims of other sides. Bosniaks, for example, speak in favour of unitarism, and Croats demand the creation of a third entity, which can be interpreted as a violation of the spirit of the Dayton Agreement.

The High Representative gives the impression that his role is to find artificial reasons to continue the existence of an Office that has become outdated. The High Representative should shake the habit of shedding factological light on what has taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina and focus on practical steps to wind down this foreign protectorate, which is an insult to the sovereignty of the country. Such an understanding of the role of the international community is in keeping with the spirit of the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. To achieve an objective picture of developments in the country, we recommend that the Secretary-General and the Security Council

carefully familiarize themselves with the regular report of the Republika Srpska, which draws attention, inter alia, to attempts to gradually revise the Dayton Agreement towards greater centralization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to undermine the constitutional autonomy of the entities and the functionality of the State as a whole.

Recognizing the importance of extending the European Union-led peacekeeping force Althea in order to maintain the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement, we oppose the use of the international presence as an instrument for accelerated integration of the country into the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In that regard, we are concerned by the fact that the High Representative is arbitrarily interpreting his mandate with respect to fulfilling civil aspects of the Dayton Agreement, and is pushing for integration into NATO and the EU. It is unacceptable, first, for the High Representative to set himself new tasks that go beyond the mandate of the Peace Agreement, the decisions of the implementation conference and relevant Security Council resolutions. Secondly, such far-reaching decisions cannot be forced from outside; they must be the result of the sovereign, voluntary decision of the three constituent peoples.

In conclusion, I wish to draw attention to trends that should raise real concerns, in the context not only of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but of the region as a whole. I refer to a growth of extremism among the Bosniak population in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Muslim communities in the Western Balkans. That threat must be seen and assessed appropriately. The terrorist act in the city of Dvornik on 27 April, when an armed Islamist attacked a police station, is confirmation of that trend. Special attention should be devoted to the participation of Bosniaks in the conflicts in the Middle East on the side of international terrorist organizations. Hundreds of citizens have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Jahbat Al-Nusra through Bosnia and Herzegovina, which serves as a channel for fighrers from Western Europe. We welcome the efforts of Sarajevo to increase the accountability of foreign fighters and their facilitators for their actions abroad.

Last year, amendments were made to the criminal code to limit the recruitment of Bosniaks into ISIL and other illegal formations abroad. Bosnian law enforcement agencies are carrying out special operations to identify such networks and arrest local mujahids. At the same time, as practice has shown, such actions and measures remain insufficient and do not provide the necessary impact to reduce the influence of Islamists. Of course, in the fragile post-conflict situation in the Balkans, that phenonemon is especially dangerous. That has been confirmed by the recent outburst of inter-ethnic and interreligious confrontation in multinational Macedonia and neighbouring regions.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and for his comprehensive report to the Council (S/2015/300, annex). Since this is Malaysia's first Security Council meeting with High Representative Inzko, I wish to express Malaysia's strong support for his work and commitment to carrying out the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords.

Malaysia welcomes the formation of the Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 2015, following the seventh general elections in October last year. The new Government's expressed commitment to prioritizing a reform agenda, especially in the economic sector, is a step in the right direction. We urge the country's leaders and political parties to close ranks and focus on accelerating efforts based on collective responsibility towards reforming the country's economy. The lack of progress in socioeconomic reforms of recent years, as highlighted in previous reports of the High Representative, must not be allowed to fester. Unemployment, particularly among young people, and the increasing flow of brain-drain in the country must be addressed as a matter of urgency. We saw how damaging that can be early last year, when the population took to the streets to engage in massive demonstrations and riots, demanding a better future and quality of life for themselves and their children.

Economic development can take place only when there is political stability. In that regard, Malaysia shares the concerns of the High Representative on the self-serving and divisive politics of certain quarters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is a dangerous game to be played with the future of the country, especially in view of its traumatic history. We therefore urge all parties to enhance efforts towards national reconciliation with a view to ensuring political stability in the country.

We take note that this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords. We hope that will present a good opportunity for all parties to renew their commitment to the Dayton Agreement.

Efforts to undermine or revise the Dayton Peace Accords must cease. We also take note of the priority accorded by the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to European Union (EU) integration as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. We welcome the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina towards this aim with the recent conclusion of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU last month. We believe that will provide further impetus for the country to accelerate its reform in the areas of the economy, the rule of law and good governance towards a future of peace, stability and prosperity within the EU, as desired by the people.

Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have long supported the country in its reconstruction after the war, and will continue to do so. Our investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the areas of real estate, construction, energy, education and capacity-building are aimed at strengthening the socioeconomic foundation of the country towards growth and prosperity. In our effort to bring the ethnic groups together towards economic and social integration, Malaysia has sought to involve the three main ethnicities in the country in our various investment projects. Based on our own multiracial and multireligious experience, we believe that is a win-win formula for all to ensure a united, stable and prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In conclusion, Malaysia stands ready to play a constructive role in the Council on the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We reiterate our unwavering commitment to contributing to the country's nation-building, inclusive democracy, reconciliation and economic progress.

Mr. Henry Alfredo Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates that full compliance with international law — as expressed in the principles of non-intervention; respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of States; and the peaceful settlement of disputes — is fundamental to maintaining international peace and security. While advocating a peaceful solution of the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we support the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace because we believe that it is the outcome of a political consensus among the parties involved. We therefore encourage the High Representative to work impartially, transparently and constructively so as to ensure a balanced and prudent approach in which the opinions and views of the stakeholders are reflected.

We believe that the international community must continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its implementation of the Peace Agreement, and to that end we call for a guarantee of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The primary responsibility for the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement lies with the Government and the people of that country, an obligation that must be exercised in full sovereignty, with the support of the international community.

We welcome the fact that the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained stable until 21 April. We note with regret the terrorist attack on a police station in the city of Zvornik in Republika Srpska in late April, which has given rise to fresh political and social tensions.

The European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina has carried out its work under the mandate assigned to it, in cooperation with the national authorities, so as to provide a safe environment for citizens of all ethnic groups in that country.

We express our solidarity with Bosnia and Herzegovina and our support for its firm commitment to peace and stability for the benefit of its citizens. To that end, we welcome the policies adopted by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to prevent the recruitment of its nationals by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front to participate as foreign terrorist fighters in the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

On the political front, we welcome the formation of the new Government following the elections of October 2014, which is an encouraging sign for the new leaders, who must now continue to work to tackle the country's main challenges. We call on all parties to redouble their efforts with renewed political resolve and courage so as to promote trust and joint work in the framework of international law, which are necessary components of a political, just and lasting solution in the interests of the parties and the entire region.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I want to thank High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Inzko for his briefing and for his forty-seventh report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and

Herzegovina (S/2015/300, annex). We have carefully studied the report and taken due note of the main issues contained therein.

Nigeria is pleased to see that, following the elections of October 2014 and the certification of the election results in November 2014, Governments and legislatures have been formed at the State, entity and cantonal levels. We encourage the political leaders in cantons where Governments are yet to be formed to work together to resolve their differences over the distribution of ministerial positions. We are concerned about reports of continued challenges to the General Framework Agreement for Peace. The divisive rhetoric and actions of political leaders that threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State are contrary to the spirit of the Dayton Peace Accords. Public figures must refrain from making inflammatory statements promoting secession, which are indeed capable of undermining the stability of the country and the entire region.

It must be understood by all concerned that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not envisage secession by any of the entities. We believe that the interests of the entities can and should be accommodated within the framework of a united Bosnia and Herzegovina. The rejection of the authority of the Constitutional Court at the entity level is also a matter of grave concern. It is a direct challenge to the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, which are two critical elements of democratic governance. We urge all entities to respect the decisions of the Court as final and binding, in accordance with their obligations under a democratic system of Government. Boycotts and walkouts are impeding the work of the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. While we recognize the rights of parliamentarians to protest, we urge them to do so in a manner that allows the legislature to continue to function unimpeded.

Despite these impediments, the two legislative houses have appointed their leaders and elected their working bodies. That is a welcome development and a strong step towards development. We also take note of the fact that joint parliamentary working committees have been appointed. We call on all concerned to work diligently to resolve their disputes over the membership of the joint committee for oversight of the Intelligence and Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We note that the Parliament has adopted an amendment to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are concerned, however, that the amendment is considered to be inadequate to meet international standards on countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. In view of the importance of closing gaps in the law that could be exploited to finance terrorism, we would urge parliamentary leaders to take action to strengthen the Criminal Code. In terms of public security and law enforcement, we note with concern that policing in Bosnia and Herzegovina is confronted by the challenge of political interference, which is causing delays in the formation of the independent boards that select police directors. We commend the Office of the High Representative for its collaboration with various stakeholders to update police legislation. It is our expectation that those reforms would enhance the independence and operational efficiency of the police.

We want to pay tribute to the High Representative for his unflinching efforts to fulfil his mandate. We support without reservation his call for the adequate staffing and funding of his Office. We believe this would greatly enhance his efforts.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): The briefing and report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2015/300, annex) today are frank in noting areas of concern, but also show that some important and positive developments took place over the reporting period.

New Zealand welcomes the formation of a new Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina subsequent to the elections in October 2014. Electoral arrangements are complex, making the holding of peaceful elections and an orderly installation of the duly-elected Government a significant achievement. We wish the Government well as it confronts the many challenges ahead. Navigating these challenges will require strong political will and determination.

The commitment of representatives from across the political spectrum to social and economic reforms, with a view to closer engagement with the European Union through the Stabilization and Association Agreement, is a positive step. The socioeconomic and good governance reforms that are part of this process will benefit all the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The strengthening of institutions and the rule of law will support lasting stability and prosperity within a well-functioning State. We encourage the international community, especially neighbours in the region and the

European Union, to support Bosnia and Herzegovina as it undertakes the necessary but difficult reforms ahead.

While healthy debate stimulates a healthy democracy, unlocking a country's full potential requires all parties to share a common aspiration for a united and prosperous future. The divisive rhetoric once again identified in the High Representative's report is therefore concerning. Attempts to undermine the unity of the country, such as through calling for a referendum on secession, distract from the important reform agenda Bosnia and Herzegovina has ahead of it. As the High Representative pointed out, they also directly challenge the basic tenets of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. We hope that such rhetoric can be left behind and for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward together in the spirit of reconciliation.

In the twentieth year of the Dayton Peace Accords, progress is clearly evident, yet still much remains to be achieved. The five objectives and two conditions set by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, which are prerequisites for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, have not yet been accomplished. While the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is, as it should be, in the hands of its citizens, the international community has a responsibility to encourage and support Bosnia and Herzegovina. To that end, New Zealand reiterates its commitment to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and wishes it well on its path to unity, stability and lasting peace.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I also would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Inzko, for his briefing.

France fully associates itself with the statement to be made shortly on behalf of the European Union. I will focus my remarks on three points.

First, concerning the political dynamics, the Bosnian people were able to exercise their democratic duty last October and to choose new representatives. A great many things in fact remain in need of improvement; testimony to that is the fact that the process for appointing the executive was significantly delayed and was not finalized until the end of March. However, we are pleased to see a new team in place, both at the level of the two entities and at the State level, where the tripartite Presidency has quickly gotten to work and has been collaborating constructively with the Office of the High Representative and with the European Union.

The task facing the Bosnian authorities is considerable, and Bosnians expect their leaders to demonstrate that they are capable of facing it. Refusing to succumb to rhetoric that exacerbates ethnic divisions, the Bosnian people as a whole have shown that their priority is socioeconomic improvement. Year after year the country has remained powerless in the face of a major issue: seeing young people take their talents abroad because of the lack of opportunities and prospects for the future. We urge the Bosnian authorities to act to improve the situation as rapidly as possible.

Secondly, I would like to consider a very important topic, that is, the European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Above all, the goal is to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the country. For that reason, we relaunched the European Union initiative with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, including European integration, which remains a strategic priority. That is a wish expressed by the Bosnians themselves, despite what some outside Bosnia and Herzegovina might want to believe. The lack of movement of the last few years could not reasonably continue, while most neighbouring States experienced considerable progress along this path. It is in that spirit that the European Union has decided to lend new momentum to the process, which, I reiterate, meets the wishes of the Bosnian population.

The formation of a new governmental team provides an ideal opportunity to take a further step towards integration, and we welcome the positive reception to date to the European Union initiative by Bosnia and Herzegovina — on the part of the Presidency, the Parliament and the main political forces in the country. The written commitment undertaken by the authorities should open the path for the socioeconomic reforms so sorely needed by the country, which will enable it to become closer to its European neighbours. The logical result of that commitment is the Stabilization and Association Agreement, which will enter into force in a few weeks and which we welcome. The upcoming Bosnian presidency of the Council of Europe, which begins on 19 May, will provide an opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina to affirm its desire to become closer to Europe and to the fundamental principles guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, so dear to the heart of the European Union.

Finally, I would like to say a few words on the existing institutional framework. The whole of Europe wishes to participate in the transformation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to contribute its integration as a united, sovereign country that enjoys full territorial integrity. In that regard, it is unacceptable that the old nationalist ideas are still voiced, thus endangering the unity and stability of the country. We reiterate our call for an end to any actions or rhetoric likely to divide the country. Our message is clear: there can be no questioning of the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We also call upon all parties to cooperate fully with the High Representative, in keeping with the Dayton Accords, which constitute the reference framework for the international community's role in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would like to pay tribute to the High Representative and his team for their commitment and dedication to uphold the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which for 20 years now has preserved peace. At the same time, the consideration of the reconfiguring the Office of the High Representative should continue. That conclusion is based on the fact that the persisting political difficulties force us to re-craft and adapt our strategy. Maintaining the exact framework and mechanisms established at the end of the 1990s does not serve the needs of the Bosnia and Herzegovina people at a time when the situation in the country and the region has considerably evolved. We wish to reinforce the cohesiveness of the international mechanism on Bosnia and Herzegovina by seeking complementarity between the Office of the High Representative and that of the European Union, the leadership of which is recognized today.

I cannot conclude by mentioning a very painful memory. We are preparing to commemorate the sad twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, described as genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We hope that the country will be able to demonstrate that it has been able to overcome old grudges and demonstrate national unity. The future of Bosnia and Herzegovina requires closer cooperation between the entities that compose it on the basis of equality and mutual respect. In that regard, intercommunity reconciliation is essential to consolidate a sense of belonging to a common history and destiny, which is a requirement for the construction of a common future. The European Union, like France, will assist Bosnians in the process.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Valentin Inzko, for his briefing and his detailed report (S/2015/300, annex) for the period 21 October 2014 to 21 April 2015. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Council today.

Spain is a friend and partner of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not only do we have strong links at the political level, but we have also enjoyed a steady closeness between our citizens during the difficult years of the conflict. We have seen a deepening of those relations since then. For that reason, this meeting is particularly important for Spain, because this is our first opportunity to take part in a debate on this issue since our country has been seated in the Security Council.

I would like to reiterate Spain's support for the work of the Office of the High Representative. Along with the countries and international bodies on the Peace Implementation Council for the Dayton Peace Accords, my country hopes that the 5+2 agenda can be carried out as soon as possible. We therefore call upon the various stakeholders to work together to that end. Until that happens, however, the High Representative's work will continue to be necessary.

In a few months we will commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, which established the basis for peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for making progress at the political and socioeconomic levels in the country — and, by extension, the entire region. I would like to emphasize the importance of that, as well to reiterate the the call upon all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to use the Accords to create greater stability in the country, to ensure its full functionality and to move towards the prosperity that we all desire.

In that context, I also wish to reiterate Spain's support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as enshrined in the Dayton Accords. Along with cooperation and constructive relations with its neighbours, as well as fulfilling the conditions and respecting communal heritage, those principles are the only way to make progress in the country's European integration process.

Spain fully aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

Along with other European Union partners, we welcome the pending entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. With that momentum, the European Union is once again resolutely demonstrating its readiness to help Bosnia and Herzegovina and ensure its European future.

In parallel, the written commitment adopted by the tripartite Presidency, which was subsequently signed on to by the leaders of the political parties and endorsed by the Parliament, is a formal basis for the way ahead for all of the institutions and representatives of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is our hope that they will continue making progress on the path of reforms, including those set out in the plan for growth and employment as well those of a constitutional nature having to do with the functioning of State institutions. We are on the right path, but there is still a way to go.

Spain once again joins others in calling on the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue their steady progress along the path of reform in accordance with the commitments made. In that regard, it is very important to establish an effective coordination mechanism. As seen today, the circumstances call for that, and they should be taken advantage of. In particular, the recent establishment of the various levels of Government following the October elections is good news. We must now take advantage of the existing momentum to deliver on the legitimate responsibilities incumbent upon them following the elections.

I conclude by stating that the elections now call for not only legitimacy, but above all rigour and responsibility. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have made clear their desire for progress. They have made their voices heard. It is now necessary to listen and to act accordingly without delay.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing today. It is fitting that my first statement in an open debate of the Security Council is on the subject of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Earlier in my career, I served in the British delegation at the Dayton peace talks. I saw first-hand how the international community, led by Dick Holbrooke, came together to help end years of brutal fighting. Later, as the British Ambassador in Sarajevo from 2005 to 2008, I witnessed how far Bosnia had progressed after the war and saw the first steps taken towards a future in the European Union (EU) and in NATO. Although those steps have faltered, the United Kingdom has always been a strong supporter of Bosnia and Herzegovina's long-term stability and prosperity. I am pleased to reassert that commitment unambiguously in the Council today.

This year, Bosnia's political leaders have an opportunity that they must not miss — to stop the drift and accelerate the journey towards a better future. They have a chance to implement the social and economic reforms their citizens expect and deserve. We must do our utmost to support them. I believe there are three areas in which we can do so.

First, let us all give our full backing to the EU initiative on Bosnia and Herzegovina, first developed by the United Kingdom and Germany. The written commitment to reform by Bosnia's leaders, including those in the Republika Srpska, is a sign that the initiative can succeed. The EU will fulfil its side of the bargain; the Stabilization and Association Agreement will soon come into force. As the British Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina when the Agreement was signed, seven years ago, I am amazed and disappointed that it has not yet come into force.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders can now harness momentum to deliver meaningful reform. Their actions need to match their written commitments. Stabilizing and stimulating Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy should be their priority — because in an average group of five young Bosnians, three of them have no jobs. Public dissatisfaction is growing. The many levels of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Government must now define their agenda for reform.

If Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders do not take that opportunity to reform, we may see a repeat of the anger that shook the streets of Sarajevo last year. The violence and challenges to law and order showed that tensions still lie just below the surface. On occasions tensions have been high this year, and we condemn the unacceptable attack against a police station in Zvornik last month. Although the frequency of such attacks may be low, their effects can be far reaching.

Secondly, the Council must continue its support to preserve the security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide this year illustrate that in every generation Bosnians, Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Bosnia Serbs have suffered from conflict. Until security and stability is embedded across Bosnia and

Herzegovina, we must do all we can to reassure this generation that we mean it when we say "Never again!"

The United Kingdom believes that the continued presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR), with an executive mandate, is the best way to provide that reassurance. We advocate the retention of this vital asset when its mandate is up for renewal in November. And we also support the continued work of the High Representative and his efforts to fulfil the five objectives and two conditions, which were set back in my time in Sarajevo and still have not been fully met.

Together, the international community has a continued role to play to deter those who question Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Last month's declaration by the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats on the independence of the Republika Srpska shows that there are those who still relish in division. But their proposed referendum is a clear breach of the Dayton Agreement. The Republika Srpska does not have the right to secede. Borders will not be redrawn. And the EU position is simple and clear: only a united, functioning, effective State of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be offered EU membership, when it meets all the conditions.

Let me conclude on my third point. In November we will mark the twentieth anniversary of Dayton. For two decades, it has been up to Bosniab and Herzegovina's political leaders, supported by the international community, to overcome their narrow interests and find common ground. They have not always managed to do so, but they will continue to have our support. This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina's newly elected leaders have a chance to demonstrate to the Council that they can act in their collective national interests and end years of stagnation. We cannot do it for them.

Just as they showed at Dayton, nearly 20 years ago, and in signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement seven years ago, they have shown in their commitment to the EU initiative that they can find consensus, they can succeed and deliver real reform, they can set aside their differences for the greater prize of economic growth, stability and prosperity. They owe it to the Bosnian people to seize this opportunity.

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic):* I wish to start by thanking the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina for his briefing. Jordan has taken note of the conclusions contained in the High Representative's forty-seventh report on implementation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina peace agreement (see S/2015/300, annex). The report includes a number of positive steps forward, which we welcome. At the same time, we are concerned by actions that continue to undermine the foundations of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The agreement between the Bosnian parties to form the current Government has placed Bosnia and Herzegovina back on the path to normalization. Jordan therefore welcomes the formation of the Government and calls on it to pursue its efforts to meet the political, social and economic aspirations of its citizens. Jordan commends the efforts undertaken in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the area of reform in general, but reaffirms the importance of redoubling efforts in the areas of the rule of law, the fight against corruption and other pivotal issues. If Bosnia and Herzegovina is to meet these challenges, the current authorities, the leaders of the various parties and the political elite need to work together vigorously to confront these challenges, regardless of their differences.

In the light of the difficult economic conditions afflicting Bosnia and Herzegovina, all stakeholders must stand together to revive the country's weakened economy. This responsibility lies primarily with Bosnians themselves, who must work to create the conditions necessary to reviving the country's economic system. At the same time, we urge the international community to continue to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in that vital sector, and we urge all the countries of the region to develop and strengthen their relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In that context, and in the interest of strengthening the country's cooperation and regional integration, Jordan welcomes the adoption by the Bosnian Parliamentary Assembly in February of the Presidency's written commitment to maintaining the country's efforts to accede to the European Union, in accordance with the aspirations of Bosnians within their broader, more comprehensive vision of the future. This will require greater effort on the part of Bosnian leaders by taking important decisions to overcome the challenges involved in meeting the necessary criteria for accession.

The political difficulties experienced by Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period that preceded the agreement on the formation of the current Government show that the only path open to the Bosnians is to work together to overcome the problems and difficulties currently afflicting the country. Thus, the respect of all Bosnians for the unity and sovereignty of Bosnia and

Herzegovina within its recognized international borders is essential to the country's progress and prosperity. We urge all those who promote the idea of secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from making such calls, which contravene the provisions of the Bosnian Constitution and the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also urge them to harness their energies to strengthen national unity and to engage in positive cooperation with all entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to the multinational stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina and commend its efforts to assist with the implementation of the peace agreements and promote capacity building.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We welcome and thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing, for introducing the report on the implementation of the peace agreement (S/2015/300, annex), and for the work being accomplished by his Office in ensuring steady progress in the consolidation of the multinational State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the outset, we would like to declare the strong support of the Republic of Angola for the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement. In our statement, we will focus on three main issues: the general political enviornment, challenges to the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Concerning the political environment, we welcome the new Government established on 31 March, six months after the general elections. Despite coalition agreements signed at the federation and entity levels, disagreement over the distribution of ministerial posts delayed the formation of the Government, justifying the view expressed in the High Representative's report on the need to improve the electoral process, including by reforming the electoral law and relevant constitutional provisions. The joint declaration on tripartite presidency, confirming the commitment to institutional reforms at all State levels in order to prepare the country for future European Union membership, is an important political development as well, as is the statement of the European Union Foreign Ministers on the need for meaningful progress in implementing the reform agenda for European Union membership application.

The initiative launched by the Foreign Ministers of Germany and the United Kingdom in November 2014 — now a European Union initiative — offers Bosnia and Herzegovina a real opportunity to make progress towards integration into the Euoprean Union. We expect that the decision adopted by the Council of the European Union, adopting the European Union Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, will effectively enter into force on 1 June and that it will provide the road map for its full integration into the European Union, guaranteeing the future of a united, sovereign, multi-ethnic, stable, prosperous and developed country.

With respect to the challenges of the General Framework Agreement for Peace 20 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, we are concerned about statements made by senior officials of Republika Srpska advocating the dissolution of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such acts undermine cohesion among the multi-ethnic communities in the country and national reconciliation. In this regard, we call upon political leaders to refrain from such rhetoric and to make every effort towards national reconciliation and the integration of all ethnic communities in order to consolidate the positive achievements made so far.

We are deeply concerned that many young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina have been joining terrorist groups in the Middle East. We call upon the authorities to adopt energetic measures and policies to counter such negative and dangerous trends.

On the issue of objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, it is regrettable that, in the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina made limited progress towards meeting the outstanding objectives set by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council as a prerequisite for the closure of the Office, as recalled in resolution 2183 (2014).

Finally, the Republic of Angola welcomes the fact that the overall security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains calm and stable. We acknowledge the activities of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea in support of peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We commend the work carried out by the Office of the High Representative to maintain a safe and secure environment in accordance with its mandate and are confident of a new future for Bosnia and Herzegovina, hoping that the new leaders will look beyond the divisions of the past and will focus on good governance, rule of law and economic reforms towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

Mr. Wang Min (China): I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina of late has remained generally stable. There has been positive progress in the political process and the area of the rule of law. Despite the floods that ravaged the country in May 2014, and thanks to the efforts of the country's people, the overall economy is moving in the right direction. Elections were held successfully late last year, and in March a new Government was formed without difficulty, for which China would like to offer its congratulations.

China respects Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and believes it is the country's sovereign right to choose its own development path and foreign policies. The international community should respect and support the Government and people in their choice of a path to development. We hope that under the new Government's leadership, all communities can live in peace and work together on their shared development in order to build on their significant achievements in national reconstruction. We also hope that comprehensive implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement will continue and that more progress will be made in all reconstruction areas.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important country in the Balkans, and its achievement of peace, stability and development is in the common interests of the international community, including the other countries in the region. At the moment, its economic development and national reconstruction are still facing complications and difficulties, and the country needs the continuing support and help of the international community if it is to achieve sustainable economic and social development and lasting peace and stability. The international community should take a balanced and prudent approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina's issues while fully respecting its people's ownership and independence, with a view to enhancing unity and achieving harmonious development that can benefit all its communities. China supports High Representative Inzko in his efforts to fulfil his mandated tasks in a way that will enable him to play a constructive role in advancing the country's political process. We are ready to join the international community in a continuing effort to contribute to lasting peace, stability and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina for the briefing on his report for the period from 21 October 2014 to 21 April 2015 (S/2015/300, annex). The period was dominated by three main political developments, the process of forming a Government following the October 2014 elections, the efforts to kick-start Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into the European Union and the actions and statements challenging the fundamental principles of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

In that regard, we welcome the High Representative's efforts to ensure the upholding of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement, promote recent advances and to continue to implement the gains that have been made in implementing the Agreement. We further welcome the announcement on 10 November of the official election results for the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the two entities and the 10 cantons in the Federation. We also commend the progress made regarding concerns about the Law on the Temporary Prohibition of Disposal of State Property enacted in March 2005, while deploring the challenges that various parties have made during the reporting period to the General Framework Agreement for Peace, which are an affront to Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We were surprised by the announcement by a member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples, reported in the media on 9 April, about his party's intention to adopt a resolution on a free and independent Republika Srpska, and we condemn it, since it undermines the country's cohesion.

We welcome the election of the new joint Presidency, composed of a Serb, a Croat and a Bosniak member, which took office in November in a constructive spirit. We also commend the Parliamentary Assembly's endorsement on 23 February of the commitment to reforms ahead of the country's entry into the European Union. We call on all authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate fully with the High Representative and the relevant international organizations, as laid down in article 9 of the General Framework Agreement, and to allow the High Representative access to information and official documents that he needs in order to carry out his mandate. We are concerned about the attitude of authorities at various levels who continue to refuse to implement many decisions of the Constitutional Court and the general lack of progress in strengthening the rule of law in the country.

Concerning the perpetrators of war crimes, we note the federal authorities' lack of persistence in prosecuting them. The political pressure being put on the police is also a serious obstacle to its ability to function properly. Regarding the issue of refugees and displaced persons, we believe that this is a central piece of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and one that will require that the State authorities and its constituent bodies ensure the creation of the political, economic and social conditions conducive to their return and harmonious reintegration without discrimination. We should also note that the reforms designed to ensure the independence of public media are stalled, thanks to disagreement between the three public broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their consequent failure to establish a national public television and radio entity as required under State legislation.

We pay deserved tribute to the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which continues to play an important role in supporting the country's efforts to maintain conditions conducive to safety and security. We also reaffirm our belief in Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and we support the Office of the High Representative in its efforts to achieve the five objectives and two conditions necessary of the Office's closure.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Lithuania.

I am pleased to welcome High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Council, and to thank him for his report (S/2015/300, annex), his briefing and all the work he does on the ground.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU).

This year is the twentieth since the end of a three-and-a-half-year war and an immense human tragedy. It also marks the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, which has been described as true scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history. The progress achieved since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement has been remarkable. The past two decades are proof of the international community's commitment to building a safer and more stable region. The sustained engagement of the EU has provided an essential framework and incentive for change. There are challenges ahead, but a great deal of progress has been achieved in the region, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception. Significant steps have been taken in realizing the vision of a prosperous, united, multi-ethnic nation. Our commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's integrity as a sovereign and united country remains strong.

The latest developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina are a clear demonstration of its people's choice of Europe and the country's firm determination to move forward on the path of EU integration. The renewed EU approach has generated momentum. With their written commitment to undertake further reforms signed by the leaders of the political parties and endorsed by the Parliamentary Assembly, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina made a remarkable decision. It was a defining moment in relations between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina and a solid step towards realizing the country's European perspective, enabling the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement as of next month. Further steps must be taken to carry on the reform agenda supporting necessary economic and social change, including measures provided by the Compact for Growth initiative, as well as close dialogue between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

While we have seen the resilience the economy has displayed in the context of the floods that affected Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries in the region last spring, tackling social and economic issues, as the High Representative's report notes, requires urgent attention. The high unemployment rate, especially among the young, is a matter of concern. Continuous reform should translate into real opportunities for the benefit of all citizens, including the youth and the unemployed. We are encouraged by the intentions of newly elected leaders to focus on their reform efforts.

We call on the authorities to capitalize on the opportunities that the renewed EU approach presents. Their full realization requires determination and unity among the political elites. The divisive nationalistic and separatist rhetoric is threatening the very foundations of the State, is counterproductive and should be discarded. As mentioned, Lithuania firmly supports the independence, unity and sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Further reconciliation and strengthening of the rule of law and administrative capacities at all levels would require overcoming the political differences and uniting for the common goal. Good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are essential for ensuring security and prosperity in the Western Balkans. Joint efforts on connectivity and other areas are important unifying

factors. We encourage the newly elected authorities to further promote regional cooperation and strengthen ties with the neighbouring countries.

Regional cooperation initiatives also contribute to addressing security threats. While the overall security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains stable, the recent incident in the city of Zvornik, where a police station was attacked and a policeman was killed underlines the need to scale up efforts by the authorities aimed at ensuring public order, safety and security. The European Union and Lithuania, as its member, will continue to provide, through the European Union-led peacekeeping force, support to Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment under the United Nations mandate.

In conclusion, we encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's leadership to demonstrate clear, strategic political will and determination and use the momentum for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to benefit from the real progress in economic and social reforms. This is essential in realizing the vision of a united and prosperous country that is strong in its diversity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset I would like to thank High Representative Mr. Valentin Inzko for his presentation of the fourty-seventh report (S/2015/300, annex) on the situation in my country. We appreciate the activities he has undertaken in his role under the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Positive political developments have taken place since the last report of the High Representative (S/2014/314, annex). A six-month period of intensive and sometimes painful post-election negotiations has come to an end in my country. All government institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are formed and ready to address a number of important issues for the present and future of the country. First of all, the much needed reforms to establish a framework for socioeconomic measures aimed at realizing a better and more prosperous life in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot wait any more.

After seven years, the strong European Union perspective is again occupying a central place in the political agenda of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The joint declaration on commitment — adopted by the Presidency on 29 January, signed by the leaders of the 14 parties represented in Parliament and fully endorsed by the Parliamentary Assembly on 23 February — reaffirmed the membership of the European Union as a strategic goal of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Following this, on 21 April the Council of the European Union adopted a decision concluding the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is expected that the Agreement will enter into force on 1 June. In this historic decision, the Council of the European Union noted

> "that having regard to the commitments thus undertaken by Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in accordance with its conclusions of 15 December 2014, the Council notes that the necessary conditions contained therein have been met and agrees to proceed with the conclusion and entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina".

It is our deep conviction that this new, modified approach of the European Union towards Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a unique opportunity to leave behind for good a period of stagnation and immobility thus showing the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina that their leaders have understood their message and call for changes.

Of course, we must be conscious that the task in front of us is massive, that a number of vital areas need serious restructuring and adaptation to the European Union standards. The relevant Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions are in the process of drawing the list of priorities for the forthcoming period. Along with internal reforms, Bosnia and Herzegovina is closely focusing on enhanced cooperation within the region, especially when it comes to infrastructure projects. As has been proved many times over, the pull of European Union integration is crucial to provide a positive incentive for my country to advance its socioeconomic, judicial and other necessary reforms and to resolve the remaining obstacles on the path towards European integration.

We are aware that our socioeconomic situation calls for urgent reform measures. As many speakers today have pointed out, youth employment and the creation of new jobs are of critical importance to keeping young professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is

one of the most urgent tasks for the newly appointed authorities at all levels. The Compact for Growth and Jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina offers a comprehensive set of measures to be undertaken in that regard.

We have witnessed lately a new dynamic in regional cooperation in the Western Balkans region. It is a clear sign of the improved relations among the countries and at the same time the awareness that a number of issues are of common interest and can be dealt with successfully only if all interested countries are involved. It pertains particularly to the big infrastructure projects related to the communication, transport and energy sectors. This course of action was confirmed and fine-tuned at the meeting of the six Prime Ministers from the Western Balkans in Brussels on 21 April. The announced financial support of the European Union in this field will be of crucial importance.

Our active participation in the activities of a number of regional organizations, as well as the United Nations, is by now well known. We are part of the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations to name just one example. Also, we are to take over as Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 19 May for a period of six months. In that regard, the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Sarajevo in May is to be the first political event of our six month tenure. We see this as an exceptional opportunity to show that Bosnia and Herzegovina has all the necessary capacities to chair the Council of Europe and its 47 countries members.

The attack on the police station in Zvornik, which took place on 27 April, serves as a reminder that the threat of terrorism and violent extremism is of great concern for our region, as it is for the rest of the world. Although we believe that this was an isolated case, it certainly calls for increased vigilance, better coordination among law enforcement and security agencies, and regional and international cooperation in fighting terrorism. My country remains fully committed and will continue to actively participate in the global effort to counter terrorism and violent extremism, for we believe that terrorism can be defeated only through the international community's coordinated action based on a sustained and comprehensive approach involving the active participation and collaboration of all States.

I would like to conclude by stating our conviction that the glass is half full. In other words, I am optimistic that today the synergy established between the country's internal political players and the international community, especially the European Union, will yield tangible and positive results. Although it has taken a long time, we now have a political process based on dialogue suitable for fulfilling the promises made to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country whose landscapes are spectacular and whose cultural diversity is rich, as Mr. Inzko rightly pointed out in his opening remarks.

The President: I now give the floor to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

I join other speakers in welcoming my good friend High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Security Council and would like to reassure him of our continued support. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina for her statement.

The European Union continues to closely follow developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Stability and progress in the country are both very important to us. I have the pleasure to inform the Council that the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union, its member States and Bosnia and Herzegovina will enter into force on 1 June, following the adoption in Sarajevo of the written commitment, which sets out an ambitious framework for a comprehensive reform agenda. We attach strategic importance to the written commitment to reform and progress towards EU membership, which has been adopted by Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency, signed by the leaders of the country's political parties and endorsed by the Parliamentary Assembly. These positive developments are crucial signs of Bosnia and Herzegovina's strong partnership with the European Union and evidence of the country's commitment to the EU path in the context of the renewed EU approach outlined by the Council of the European Union in December 2014.

Following the October 2014 general elections, the process of forming State and entity parliaments and Governments has now been concluded. Representatives of the newly formed State and entity-level Governments are now engaging with the European Union and international partners, including with the international financial institutions, towards the development and

implementation of the initial reform agenda. This reform agenda should be in line with the EU acquis and will need to focus on Copenhagen criteria: socioeconomic reforms, including rule of law and good governance, and agreed functionality issues, including the EU coordination mechanism. It should also embrace the Compact for Jobs and Growth initiative, of which the Council was informed in May 2014 (see S/PV.7176).

Comprehensive efforts towards the implementation of reforms by the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina will benefit all citizens of the country, irrespective of their ethnicity or religious affiliation. Meaningful progress in the implementation of reforms will strengthen stability and build strong foundations for future development and prosperity. It will also play a role in further progress on the EU integration path.

Despite the foregoing important positive signs, there is a long way to go in Bosnia and Herzegovina before we can declare unreserved success. Deeply rooted divisions remain and reconciliation is slow. Socioeconomic challenges can be easily manipulated for political purposes. There have been attempts to do so. Divisive and separatist rhetoric remains a cause for serious concern and is highly disruptive of the reforms that Bosnia and Herzegovina has to implement. Statements are made and initiatives are taken for short-term political purposes. Misleading and harmful political visions are offered to the public, often to consolidate power and distract attention from deep socioeconomic challenges and from the political responsibility for the state of the economy. Such behaviour undermines trust in the domestic political leadership and questions its intentions and its commitment to the success of the reform process in the country.

Since September 2011, the consolidated presence of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been fully engaged in supporting the country, including in all EU-related matters. The recently appointed Special Representative of the European Union, who is also our Head of Delegation in Sarajevo, Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, has just arrived there, and will, like his predecessors, continue to provide political guidance on military issues with a local political dimension to the EU Force Commander.

The European Union also continues to accompany Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in the security field. The overall security situation has remained calm and stable, yet stability has not been entrenched. The recent dramatic incident in Zvornik, where a police station was attacked by an individual and a policeman was killed, is an indicator of the persistent risks in the area of public order and security and a reminder of the need for continuous efforts in these areas. In addition, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina need to address the root causes of the socioeconomic difficulties and further improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies.

In relation to the foregoing, the EU is ready to keep the EU-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea focused on capacity-building and training while retaining the capability to contribute to the authorities' deterrence capacity, if the situation so requires. EUFOR Althea is also ready to play an executive military role to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment under a United Nations mandate. Further, in the context of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, we look forward to continuing the discussions with the international community in the appropriate forum on the reconfiguration of the international presence and call on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet the outstanding objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

The EU reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country as well as to Bosnia and Herzegovina's European Union prospects. The European Union will continue to provide the necessary support and assistance for promoting the country's stability, reforms, development and European integration process.

A new energy and spirit are evident. They must be sustained and further strengthened to take on the deep-rooted divisions and challenges that remain, including the need for significant improvement of the efficiency and functionality of the country's institutions in general, to ensure the sustainability and continuity of democratic reforms that have been in place since 1995, and to develop capacities and capabilities required in the context of EU accession, particularly as regards coordination among various levels of Government.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to invite the Security Council to urge the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to respond to its citizens' demands, maintain positive momentum by delivering on its commitments to reforms, including those relating to the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, to look beyond persistent political divisions

and to finally and decisively move the country forward on its reform agenda towards stability and prosperity for all its citizens as it advances on the path to the European Union.

The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve progress, prosperity and prospects for a better future. The European Union stands ready to help and assist the country to fulfil this vision and encourages all the stakeholders in the country and the region to provide their share of support. Bosnia and Herzegovina's tangible progress on the comprehensive reform path is in the best interest of the country, the region and the European Union itself.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): At the outset, I join other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko and expressing our appreciation for his briefing and the report (S/2015/300, annex), as well as for the personal efforts he has tirelessly invested in carrying out his mandate.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I will add several remarks in my national capacity.

For Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only a neighbouring country with which we share a 1,000-kilometre long border; it is a country with which we nourish friendly partnership relations and which we consider our ally. The fact that the Croatian President, Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, chose Bosnia's capital Sarajevo for her first foreign bilateral visit since taking office in February this year tellingly confirms the importance Croatia assigns to its relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croatia strongly supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its stability and prosperity are of paramount importance to us. We will continue to advocate for sustained attention from the international community to Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a goal of achieving concrete progress in the country's process of European integration.

Ensuring genuine equality between its three constituent peoples is an important and necessary element for achieving the stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Six months after the elections, all authorities have finally been established in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We note with satisfaction that Croats — the numerically smallest of the three constituent peoples in the country — finally have a legitimate member of the Presidency and are represented at all levels of the Government in an equal and legitimate manner.

The last thing Bosnia and Herzegovina needs is secessionist and inflammatory rhetoric. For that reason, we condemn recent statements and actions by the Republika Srpska, such as the adoption of the declaration on free and independent Republika Srpska, as well as the controversial interpretation of what happened in Srebrenica 20 years ago. Such acts are completely unacceptable. On the other hand, Mr. Milorad Dodik's visit to Srebrenica in April could be an encouraging harbinger in the much-needed reconciliation process.

The twentieth anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica this July will be another opportunity for all of us to honour the memory of the worst atrocity in Europe since the end of the Second World War. What happened in Srebrenica constitutes genocide, as established by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Attempts to deny it are simply unacceptable.

We strongly believe that the steady and forward-looking European integration process is the most efficient and constructive way to reach the internal consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia firmly supports the new European Union (EU) approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has put the country back on the EU agenda and provided it with a real opportunity to achieve progress through comprehensive and feasible reforms. We fully support the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina's engagement on this new EU initiative in the hope that it will continue to initiate much-needed political and economic reforms. In order to succeed, these reforms will require, besides improved administrative capacities and lots of hard work, consensus from all political parties.

The Croatian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Vesna Pusić, visited Sarajevo last month and afterwards organized a ministerial working breakfast on the margins of the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 20 April in Luxembourg. It was an excellent opportunity to exchange views on the preparation of the initial reform agenda and reaffirm once again the EU perspective on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croatia welcomes the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina on 1 June. This is its first contractual relationship with the EU, providing a structured blueprint for far-reaching political, economic and social reforms. As far as Bosnia and Herzegovina's advancement to NATO is concerned, we urge the newly elected political leaders to intensify efforts on the implementation of the six parties' political agreement on the issue of military property and to work constructively to implement the agreement in order to start the first membership action plan cycle as soon as possible.

We condemn the recent terrorist attack on the police station in Zvornik and express condolences to the family of the police officer who was killed in the attack. We expect the competent authorities and institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina at all levels to cooperate closely in order to prevent such incidents in the future. Bearing this in mind, the EU military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an executive mandate, remains of vital importance.

We regret that the additional protocol to the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet been concluded. It is long overdue. It is therefore crucial that Bosnia and Herzegovina re-engage in constructive discussions with the EU in order to approve the Agreement's technical adaptation as a matter of urgency. We also expect that Bosnia and Herzegovina will correct its present conduct regarding some customs-control related issues on parts of its border with Croatia.

In conclusion, I echo my opening remarks by stressing that Croatia fully supports Bosnia and Herzegovina and extends to it a hand of true friendship and partnership. Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves a secure and prosperous future and Croatia will spare no effort in providing its help along this challenging road.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): I would like to thank High Representative Inzko for his report (S/2015/300, annex) and his statement made today. As a next-door neighbour, Serbia has a vital interest in the stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, we are firmly committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country as provided for by the Dayton Agreement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of Serbia's key partners in the region and my country is resolved to continue promoting good-neighbourly relations with all political structures and in all areas and at all levels of Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia welcomes and fully supports the new Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to European integration, as well as the reforms it intends to introduce.

My country is very concerned at the killing of one and the wounding of two other officers of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska at Zvornik on 27 April. We condemn these heinous acts of terrorism in the strongest terms and expect the perpetrators to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Terrorism and radicalism in general, and the departure of men and women from our part of the world to fight in foreign wars, in particular, do not contribute to the peaceful and prosperous life of our citizens. Both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are members of the global coalition to fight terrorism and have amended national laws to incriminate foreign terrorist fighters. Notwithstanding the fact that many of the fighters fight far from home, the recent terror attack is stark and sad evidence that our countries will not be spared from these monstrous practices, for terrorism has no knowledge of, or will to respect, national borders. This modern scourge must be confronted, and Serbia is ready to cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina in fighting terrorism, extremism and organized crime in all their forms in the belief that regional cooperation is the mainstay of stability and prosperity of the entire region.

Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina maintain a very high level of political dialogue. This is evinced, among other things, by the visit of Serbia's Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić to Sarajevo last year, his first international visit upon taking office. He will visit Sarajevo again tomorrow. This April, Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić met Bosnia and Herzegovina's Foreign Minister Igor Crnadak in Belgrade, while Foreign Minister Dačić travelled to Sarajevo on 29 April in his capacity as Chairperson of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Furthermore, an initiative to hold a joint session of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been launched.

Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are agreed that economic cooperation, especially in the field of transport, infrastructrue and energy, is of paramount

importance to promoting good bilateral and regional relations. That is particularly significant in the context of recovery that is taking place in the two countries in the wake of last year's immense flooding, and makes it incumbent upon them to address themselves to rebuilding of infrastructure, without which no successful country-to-country cooperation would be possible, and which, just as importantly, links ordinary people as they go about their everyday lives.

Serbia is a staunch supporter of the European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and welcomes the conclusion of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. That is good news not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but for the region as a whole. We believe that European integration is the most efficient way to bring overall progress and economic development to all countries of the region. We are therefore ready to promote cooperation in that area, exchange experiences and coordinate our activities. In that context, of particular importance is the work of the commission for the implementation of the action plan of the bilateral agreement on cooperation in the area of European integration. Also, we are committed to continuing our cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina within the framework of the programme of cross-border cooperation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

At the beginning of this year, my country assumed the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Bosnia and Herzegovina will soon preside over the Council of Europe. That will provide various possibilities to embark upon a whole range of joint activities and projects that will contribute to development, stability and cooperation in the region. In addition to the fight against terrorism, which currently preoccupies us all, we intend, in that context, to include in our agenda the question of young people. The young people of our countries are our greatest asset in the long run and the most important building block as they strive to promote democracy and tolerance and bring about much-needed stability and prosperity.

Serbia cooperates with Bosnia and Herzegovina on a partnership basis, with understanding and respect for mutual interests and differences. In our efforts to promote mutual relations, we are ready to work hard to find timely and efficient solutions to all outstanding issues. To that end, let me point out the concrete contribution that was made recently by my country to the efforts of the Offices of the War Crimes Prosecutors of the two countries to investigate and punish all the perpetrators of war crimes in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through constructive cooperation and partnership, we must continue to work together to build mutual respect and understanding, thereby contributing to the prosperity of our citizens. We stress that overcoming unease with some past legacies and the promotion of regional cooperation and good-neighbourliness are what we are after.

Reconciliation and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina are in our mutual interest for the future of new generations. Illustrative of that — and as mentioned in the report before us — was the visit by the President of Republika Srpska, Mr. Milorad Dodik, on 16 April to the Potocari Memorial Centre and the wreath he laid in honour of the victims.

In conclusion, let me point out that, even though George Santayana's poignant maxim that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it is indeed very true, we must not allow the legacies of the past to cause us to stumble and go astray on our road to a common European future.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.